

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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P R 021015Z MAR 76 ZFF5

FM AMEMBASSY DACCA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9867

INFO AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

CINCPAC

CINCPACAF

CINCPACFLT

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, MPOL, BG

SUBJECT: ZIA VERY MUCH IN EVIDENCE IN CHITTAGONG

REF: DACCA 1060

1. A COHERENT PICTURE OF EVENTS IN CHITTAGONG OVER THE PAST WEEKEND HAS YET TO EMERGE. BUT WHATEVER THE FACTS MAY BE, THE GOVERNMENT HAS MOVED DECISIVELY TO DEMONSTRATE ITS AUTHORITY. IN HIGHLY PUBLICIZED FASHION, GENERAL ZIA YESTERDAY MORNING (MONDAY, MARCH 1) PRESIDED OVER A RELATIVELY ELABORATE REVIEW AT THE CHITTAGONG

CANTONMENT OF A NEW BATTALION OF THE EAST BENGAL REGIMENT THAT HAS RECENTLY BEEN RAISED. IN HIS ADDRESS FOLLOWING THE PARADE, GENERAL ZIA REPORTEDLY TOLD THE TROOPS THAT "UNITY, DISCIPLINE AND A SENSE OF PATRIOTISM" ARE BANGLADESH'S PRIME NEEDS. AMONG THE DIGNITARIES AT THE CEREMONY WERE BRIGADIER MIR SHAWKAT ALI, COMMANDER OF THE

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NINTH DIVISION BASED IN DACCA; COLONEL ATIQU'R RAHMAN, COMMANDER OF

THE CHITTAGONG GARRISON; AND CHITTAGONG NAVAL BASE C

NMANDER SULTAN

AHMED. LATER IN THE DAY, GENERAL ZIA MET WITH LOCAL CIVILIAN OFFICIALS AND EXHORTED THEM TO WORK WITH PATRIOTIC ZEAL.

2. GENERAL ZIA'S APPEARANCE RECEIVED EXTENSIVE RADIO, TELEVISION AND NEWSPAPER COVERAGE, LARGELY, WE THINK, TO DEMONSTRATE THAT ZIA WAS IN FULL CONTROL OF HIS TROOPS AT CHITTAGONG. THERE HAVE BEEN NO REPORTS OF FRESH OUTBREAKS AT THE CANTONMENT. GENERAL ZIA'S APPEARANCE

AND THE FACT THAT THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS TOLD A DIPLOMATIC COLLEAGUE THAT THERE WAS NO REASON TO POSTPONE A VISIT TODAY TO CHITTAGONG LEAD US TO BE BELIEVE THAT, AT LEAST FOR THE TIME BEING, CALM

HAS BEEN RESTORED TO TH CANTONMENT.

3. WE STILL HAVE NO CLEAR EXPLANATION OF WHAT CAUSED THE TROUBLE OVER THE WEEKEND. VARIOUS VERIONS ARE CIRCULATING, SOME OF WHICH SUGGEST THAT THE DISTURBANE STEMMED FROM SEPOY AGITATION FOR INCREASED PAY AND OTHER IMPROVEMENTS IN THEIR LOT. SINCE SUCH DEMANDS BECAME AN ISSUE IN THE NOVEMBER MUTINY, IT IS PERHAPS INEVITABLE THAT SOME OBSERVERS SEE THE HAND OF THE JSD BEHIND THIS LATEST TROUBLE. WE REPEAT,

HOWEVER, THAT THERE IS AS YET INSUFFICIENT INFORMATION TO DETERMINE THE POLITICAL COLORATION, IF ANY, OF THE EPISODE.

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